

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

44 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-8724



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ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-124-83

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: FAMILY REUNIFICATION AND PERMANENT PLACEMENT PROGRAMS
ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this All-County Information Notice is to transmit statewide findings on the Family Reunification/Permanent Placement Programs Administrative Questionnaire that was completed by each county as a part of the statewide review of the Family Reunification/Permanent Placement programs in May and June of 1983.

The Family Reunification/Permanent Placement Programs Administrative Questionnaire was designed to focus on information about counties' caseloads, systems and operations as well as counties' perceived strengths and problems with SB 14. This information is being used to identify those areas of SB 14 implementation which may need more clarification and/or technical assistance from the State. The specific findings are stated below.

Caseload

Roughly 27,000 children were in foster care at the time of the review; approximately 48 percent of the children in placement were reported to be in the Family Reunification Program, and 52 percent in the Permanent Placement Program. Using the AFDC Program Management Branch's definitions of county size groupings (small, medium and large), Family and Children's Services Program Operations Bureau determined that, as a group, the large counties had an average of 58 percent of their total caseloads in the Family Reunification Program and 42 percent in the Permanent Placement Program; the small and medium counties' FR caseload averaged 45 percent and the PP caseload averaged 55 percent.

Counties reported that a variety of procedures including tickler systems (7 counties), color coding of case folders (10 counties), and monthly caseload lists (12 counties), were used to identify FR and PP cases. Other procedures for identifying FR and PP

cases were through worker and/or specific unit designation, caseload numbering systems and court reports. Processes reported by counties to ensure that children received completed Permanency Planning Hearings within 18 months of placement are tickler systems (20 counties), caseload control files (13 counties), and court calendars (9 counties). The majority of counties use some kind of control file/tickler system. Program Operations Bureau will be obtaining descriptions of these processes to share with counties who are interested in developing these procedures as a part of their internal operations.

Systems and Operations

In response to the question concerning how the joint adoption assessment process expedited the adoption of children in foster care, 29 counties reported that the joint adoption process did expedite the adoption of children in foster care. Various reasons why the process is beneficial including the following:

- "The adoption worker has helped to initiate the process that the case worker was attempting to initiate."
- "By subjecting individual cases to scrutiny by adoption experts, thus helping to identify those with adoption potential and to formulate action plans to facilitate adoption."

Eighteen counties responded that the joint adoption assessment did not specifically expedite the adoption process, citing more positive processes such as continued follow-up with county counsel and adoption workers. Barriers to the effectiveness of the joint adoption process were identified by counties as county counsel's high workloads and lack of adoptive homes.

Another area covered in the administrative questionnaire was how counties obtained feedback for contracted services. Of the counties that contract out for services, 11 said that onsite monitoring and written reports were the means used to obtain feedback on contracted services. Five counties used joint case staffing as a means of obtaining feedback.

Counties were also asked what they experienced as the strengths of the Administrative Review Panels. Of the counties that have them in operation, seven counties felt that the panel supported treatment plans developed jointly by the worker and the family. Four counties reported that the formal monitoring by the Administrative Review Panel of cases increased the likelihood of appropriate placement/termination.

Strengths and Weaknesses of SB 14


In July of 1982, 25,000 children were in placement and at the time of the review in May and June of 1983, counties reported approximately 3,700 children had been reunified with their families since July of 1982. Procedures reported to be helpful in reunification efforts included service agreements (39 counties), staffing conferences (11 counties), and frequency of court reviews (8 counties). Close monitoring of parent progress by the social worker, accurate assessments of the child's/parent's ability to reunite, were also thought to be helpful. In terms of services mandated by SB 14, counseling was chosen as the highest priority service (36 counties), with parent training being the next highest (7 counties). Emergency Shelter Care, Teaching and Demonstrating Homemakers, and Transportation were seen as being of equal value.

Following is a table which summarizes the counties' responses concerning the items which they see as hindering the implementation or operations of SB 14 as well as the programmatic strengths. Counties also reported the need for more lead/implementation time as well as additional funds to implement SB 14.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Strengths*</u>	<u>Weaknesses*</u>
Required services	28	23
Visit requirements	27	18
Burden of proof requirement	14	9
Time-limited services and placement	38	8
Providing written reassessments to parents	31	6
Case management time frames	29	13
Out-of-county placement requirements	12	19
Court reviews	32	7

*County responses

We hope that this information is useful to you. Should you have any questions please contact your program management consultant at (916) 445-8724 or 445-0623.


 LOREN D. SUTER
 Deputy Director
 Adult and Family Services Division

cc: CWDA